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**TESTIMONY OF
ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
BEFORE THE PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 26, 2007**

I appreciate the opportunity to support House Bill 6915, An Act Appropriating Funds for Anti-smoking Education.

Each year, 4,800 children begin smoking on average at 11 years old. Almost one in five Connecticut children smoke and 76,000 of them will die prematurely from a smoking related illness.

We have the financial resources to fund a strong tobacco prevention, cessation and education program adequate to prevent children from smoking. Annually, Connecticut receives more than \$100 million from the tobacco companies as a result of our settlement of the lawsuit brought by my office. Only recently have we began to spend even a small amount of those funds on tobacco cessation and education. Last year, for the first time in five years, the General Assembly appropriated funds for tobacco cessation programs.

Connecticut ranks 36 among all the states on spending for tobacco education and cessation programs.

House Bill 6915 appropriates \$3 million from the Tobacco Settlement fund for tobacco education programs. This step a good start but much more needs to be done. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends the state spend \$22 million from the settlement funds to have a truly effective tobacco education and cessation program.

I urge the committee -- for the sake of our children -- to appropriate the full CDC recommendation.